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13th plenary meeting
Thursday, 27 September 2012, 3 p.m.
New York

*President*: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Touray (Sierra Leone), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

**Address by Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia**

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia.

*Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President**: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Mori**: I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating the new President of the General Assembly and in commending the President of the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session for his excellent leadership. Allow me also to convey my deep respect for the tireless efforts that His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has made as leader of the Secretariat and as a world statesman.

Today our world continues to face numerous arduous challenges that require an urgent and collective response. Many of the gravest threats to the States members of the Assembly, including mine, the Federated States of Micronesia, are simply beyond the abilities of our individual countries to single-handedly address, even with our most aggressive and concentrated efforts. To speak before this body today is an honour and an opportunity that I must take to encourage international cooperation to help address those challenges.

The biggest challenge we face today in Micronesia continues to be climate change, not just the projections of future loss and damage, but the dangerous impacts that my people are experiencing every day. Sadly, to date no significant progress has been made on climate-change mitigation. Time and again, I have asked, "How do I tell my people that their plight and their future lie in the hands of those most responsible for greenhouse gases?"

From our point of view, we must step up our collective efforts to confront global climate change more urgently and more creatively. What is needed now is to close the ambition gap. I therefore call on the major emitters to step up their level of commitment under the Kyoto Protocol. Our very existence depends on it. Without international cooperation and assistance, we are helpless against the adverse impacts of climate change.

Micronesia has barely contributed to the problem of climate change; it has, in fact, contributed to some of the solutions thereto. We actively participate in United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations and continue to advocate for significant cuts in greenhouse-gas emissions.

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We were therefore pleased with the agreement reached this summer in Rio to begin cooperation on a global phase-down in the production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). Micronesia first proposed amending the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer in 2009. Today it remains the ideal venue for a phase-down of the production and consumption of HFCs, just as has been done with respect to similar gases that HFCs were invented to replace.

To the rest of the world, the map may look fairly empty on our side of the globe, but to all of us it is as much a homeland as any continental land mass. We must treat it accordingly, and we must defend it just as strongly. And therein lies our second, closely related challenge: the change in our ocean environment. That change includes not only rising tides and temperatures and ocean acidification, but also the damage caused by harmful and destructive fishing practices, pollutants such as mercury and oil, and other waste resulting from unsustainable human activity. The abhorrent practice of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing continues unabated, and urgent actions to reduce by-catch, fish discards and post-harvest losses must be taken.

For us, as a Pacific small island developing State, our livelihood, our economy, our culture and our way of living are tied to a blue economy. We have recognized that the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean and its resources are key elements in achieving sustainable development. We must fulfil our commitments made at Rio.

My country welcomes the decision taken in Rio to hold a global conference on small island developing States in 2014. Micronesia fully supports that decision and reiterates its call to hold such a conference in one of the Pacific small island developing States.

The rising cost of global energy continues to pose a serious challenge to our socioeconomic development and sustainability. Small island developing States such as Micronesia continue to rely heavily on imported fossil fuel despite the abundance of renewable energy sources. Our unique and particular vulnerabilities often translate into significantly higher costs for energy infrastructure and fossil fuels. As a consequence, our Governments spend a high percentage of our limited budgets on fossil-fuel procurement alone, often at the expense of the other sectors of our economies.

To mitigate that situation, small island developing States adopted the Barbados Declaration on Achieving Sustainable Energy for All in Small Island Developing States, which has become an annex to the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, adopted last June. That is a concrete expression of the small islands' own determination and ambition to promote renewable energy, energy efficiency, energy access and low-carbon development.

However, our transition to renewable energy requires financing and new, appropriate and affordable technology. To that end, I must recognize and commend the bilateral assistance already provided in that area by the European Union, Japan, China, the United States, France, Italy and Turkey, as well as others that are also assisting through other multilateral arrangements. We urge other partners to join us to ensure sustainability. We also urge support for the Secretary-General's initiative on "Sustainable Energy for All".

Our health-care system is increasingly under stress and facing constant challenges from the growing burden of non-communicable diseases, which has reached epidemic proportions in the Pacific. While we accept that the primary responsibility for health rests with our Government, we are seeking assistance from the international community in capacity-building, institutional strengthening and policy formulation. While we recognize the contributing effects of nutrition and lifestyle in that epidemic, we are also mindful of the fact that climate change has magnified the challenge as a result of the threat it poses to food security and the traditional lifestyle of Micronesians.

The Federated States of Micronesia supports the greater participation of women in social, political and economic development. We look to development partners to enhance our investment in ensuring that the potential of women is nurtured and realized through quality education, health-care services and security measures against domestic and gender-based violence. It is only appropriate that measures to empower women to be true participants in nation-building should be locally driven. We have embarked on mainstreaming women's views, interests and contributions into national development policies. We recognize and appreciate the assistance extended by the United Nations system and our development partners to support our national policies to enhance gender equality.

Turning to our Organization, the single most urgent need is to reform the Security Council. Naturally, such an important step must not be taken in haste. However, after more than a decade of talking, we should be close to finding an acceptable formulation. Success on this issue will strengthen the Organization and stimulate and renew confidence in the Charter.

My country subscribes to the principles of peace, security and prosperity, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We are horrified by the senseless killing of thousands of innocent civilians in Syria. Over the past two weeks, we have witnessed surges in violence. We join the international community in condemning violence, in particular the attacks on diplomatic missions, diplomats and personnel in Libya and Egypt. We must be bold in our actions to prevent such attacks. I call on Member States to continue their efforts to find peaceful solutions to these conflicts, especially the most challenging ones.

The United Nations has the unique opportunity to address and solve the many challenges facing its weakest and most vulnerable States Members. The challenge lies in how the Organization and its most able Members can turn their many ambitious statements into mob. .zing the required resources to successfully protect the citizens of the world.

We in the Federated States of Micronesia, facing our troubled world, continue to place our faith in the United Nations as we look towards future. Our isolation amid the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean no longer shields us from the threat of international terrorism. Globalization has long had a foothold on our island State. Facebook links us to the world.

Allow me to end with a quote from my Constitution: "The seas bring together, they do not separate us .... We extend to all nations what we seek from each: peace, friendship, cooperation and love in our common humanity".

**The Acting President**: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Mohamed Waheed, President of the Republic of Maldives**

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Maldives.

*Mr. Mohamed Waheed, President of the Republic of Maldives, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President**: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Waheed, President of the Republic of Maldives, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Waheed**: At the outset, I express my delegation's warmest congratulations to the President on assuming office to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I would like to record our deepest appreciation to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for his untiring efforts in steering the deliberations of the sixty-sixth session to a successful conclusion.

I also wish to congratulate the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his extraordinary report (A/67/1) presented to the Assembly on Tuesday. Despite the many unprecedented challenges facing the United Nations today, we remain confident that the Secretary-General's leadership and the resolve of the Organization and of humankind will not waver.

I represent a small yet proud island nation that has long advocated for an effective international framework for the security of small States, that has vigorously campaigned for international actions to combat climate change and that has contributed to breaking the international silence on the human rights implications of climate change.

I come from a nation that has successfully moved from an authoritarian system to a multiparty democratic system of governance — a historic transition achieved purely by peaceful means. That is why Maldivians show their solidarity with people everywhere in the world who struggle to replace despotism with democracy. That is why we support the ongoing democratization process in the Middle East and North Africa, and that is why we applaud Tunisia and Egypt for holding their first post-transition elections in a free and fair manner.

While the democratization processes in other countries in the region are on an upward trajectory, we see violence and human rights violations in Syria. We urge the Syrian security forces and anti-Government armed groups to immediately cease all hostilities and violence. We welcome the latest findings of the United Nations commission of inquiry on the human rights situation in Syria.

We strongly believe that tolerance and mutual respect should prevail among different religions and cultures to ensure that the world we live in remains peaceful and harmonious for the future of our children. The Maldives strongly condemns the recent anti-Islamic video demeaning our Prophet Muhammad — peace be upon him. Freedom of expression should not be used as an excuse to insult religions, incite hatred or provoke communal violence. While the video has provoked demonstrations around the world, the Maldives does not believe that violence is the way to respond to such low-level blasphemous acts.

The Maldives has also condemned the attack on the United States Consulate in Benghazi, which took the life of the United States Ambassador to Libya. On behalf of the Maldivian people, I express my deepest condolences to the United States Government and the families of the bereaved.

My delegation and I express the wishes of the Maldivian people to see the day that the Palestinian people join the United Nations as a full Member. The Maldives strongly calls on all Member States to support the true aspirations of the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination in a Palestinian State.

In June we, the leaders of the world, agreed to signal our solid political commitment towards establishing sustainable development goals. We believe that those goals would further strengthen the social, economic and environmental well-being of nations. The 2015 development agenda should recognize the particular characteristics and needs of small States. It should support the creation of a stronger international architecture to achieve a sustainable future for all.

Climate change remains the most important and complex developmental challenge that small States face. We face the threat of rising sea levels. We experience ocean acidification, changes in average temperature and variable precipitation. Coastal erosion is a serious problem in the Maldives, affecting more than 113 islands. An additional 120 islands need emergency water during the dry season. The Government now spends more than 27 per cent of our national budget on building our resilience to combat the effects of climate change.

The Maldives reiterates its call for a binding agreement to reduce global carbon emissions. The world cannot afford to wait any longer for such an agreement; nor can we. The absence of a global accord is no excuse for doing nothing. The Maldives is one of the smallest island economies in the world. Our contribution to global emissions is 0.003 per cent, yet we are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. For that reason, we are also taking difficult and bold measures to combat climate change. We were among the first countries in the world to eradicate chlorofluorocarbons well ahead of time. We intend to become the first to eradicate hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) by 2020. And we intend to become the first to ban the import of HCFC-based equipment. A number of our islands are also scaling up renewable energy, not only to avoid spending 20 per cent of our gross domestic product on importing fossil fuel, but also to reduce harmful emissions.

Hence, we are converting to solar or hybrid sources. A total of 20 islands in the Maldives will switch to renewable energy sources for power by next year. Those measures are part of a national initiative to transform the country's economy into a low-carbon one. If we can take those measures, why cannot the larger States, endowed with more resources, take stronger measures? That requires political commitment and difficult choices. I therefore call upon carbon-emitting countries to develop and utilize clean and renewable energy to reduce their carbon footprint.

Climate change is just one of many challenges faced by the Maldives. The country's transition to democracy, which has reached a critical point, is another pressing challenge that we are determined to overcome. Four years ago, the Maldives held its first competitive, multiparty presidential elections. That was a watershed moment in the country's long march towards democratic governance. Four years after that historic election, in October 2008, people in the Maldives ask if their lives are any better. The answer, regrettably, is, not yet. Multiparty democracy in the Maldives has so far been deeply divisive. It is also polarizing, tearing apart families and the fabric of a small, homogenous society. Political leaders elected to office by popular vote chose to act with impunity.

Centuries-old values of respect and tolerance have been replaced by intolerance and hatred in the islands where almost everyone literally knows everybody else. That is not because there is any inherent deficiency in the democratic form of governance; rather, it is because the road to liberal democracy is always rocky and long and must be navigated by a political leadership with an unshakeable commitment to the principles and values of democracy.

The past eight months have been particularly challenging for the consolidation of democracy in my country. The elected President of the country resigned in February, and later claimed that he was forced to do so. The Government opened a commission of inquiry to investigate the allegations. Some of our friends rushed to conclusions, and that did not make it any easier for us. Some big States and some not so big States took sides in a domestic political crisis and contributed to making a bad situation worse. While the Government was striving to strengthen the country's institutional capacity to manage the new democracy, some international actors continued to publicly criticize the country's young institutions.

We look for new ideas and are receptive to good ones, irrespective of where they come from. That is why we engage in international cooperation. We expect the result of international cooperation to help, not hinder, a country's march towards a better, more democratic society. It is supposed to build a country's institutions and to gain public confidence. International cooperation should not be used to undermine national capacities. It should not be used as an excuse for larger countries to interfere in the domestic politics of small States.

Small States are vulnerable in many ways. We alone are not able to stop larger and stronger countries from dictating terms. Our vulnerability is particularly acute when there is discord and system breakdowns in our countries. This is the time when the larger States should help the smaller States in the international system.

The history of a nation is never a single event or a single person. The life of our nation is composed of the lives of all of us who live there. We are the building blocks in the evolution of our countries. The knowledge, education, experience and commitment we bring to our nation are what shapes our history. They make our history unique. Respect for us and our small nation requires that our external partners not underestimate our capacity to contribute to the shaping of our own destiny. Nations must be allowed to resolve their problems on their own. The international community should not take punitive actions against any sovereign State unless there is verifiable and blatant abuse of human rights.

Yet I believe that international cooperation can and should promote positive change in emerging democracies. I believe that international organizations such as the United Nations can play a pivotal role in strengthening democratic institutions in such nations.

I believe that some of the advanced democracies can also help small States with technical expertise in consolidating democracy.

To do that, it is important to recognize the unique challenges and characteristics of small States. It is important to protect the social fabric of the tightly knit societies in our countries. It is important to review current approaches and modalities for extending international cooperation in the promotion of democracy. It is important that international cooperation not be seen to be promoting a particular ideology. It should not be seen to be taking sides in domestic politics. International cooperation should be seen to promote and encourage a home-grown democracy that is consistent with universally accepted values and principles.

Regular, free and fair elections are a fundamental component in any democracy. Yet holding elections is not, by itself, a sufficient condition for consolidating democracy. It requires patience. It requires making hard choices and compromises. And it requires cultivating and nurturing democratic values. My Government is implementing a comprehensive plan to nurture such values in the Maldives. We are committed to creating an environment that guarantees individual freedom, where human rights are fully protected, where democratic values flourish and where human innovation thrives. We are committed to creating a democratic and free society that is able to shape its own destiny.

**The Acting President**: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the President of the Republic of Maldives for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Mohamed Waheed, President of the Republic of Maldives, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Luis Federico Franco Gómez, President of the Republic of Paraguay**

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Paraguay.

*Mr. Luis Federico Franco Gómez, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President**: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Luis Federico Franco Gómez, President of the Republic of Paraguay, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Franco Gómez** (*spoke in Spanish*): At the opening of my statement in today's general debate, allow me to express to Mr. Vuk Jeremić, President of the General Assembly, the satisfaction felt by the Republic of Paraguay at seeing him preside over the work of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. He can be assured of my delegation's constant support during his time in office. Allow me also to congratulate Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for his important and effective work as President of the General Assembly at its previous session. I also extend my congratulations to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his commendable work during the past six years at the head of the Organization, during which he demonstrated his firm commitment to global peace and international security.

In relation to the theme of the general debate, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means", the Government of Paraguay once again asserts and confirms the importance of settling disputes by peaceful means while respecting the principles of international law. Relations between States would be fairer, more supportive and more equitable were they governed by full compliance with international law, the principles of which guide and direct the peaceful settlement of disputes. In my country's view, favouring political expediency over treaty commitments is unacceptable, because political considerations can never take precedence over formal international agreements.

On this first and last time that I will address the General Assembly, I believe it is necessary and unavoidable to elucidate to the international community the political process that my country is currently undergoing. The history of Paraguay changed on the night of 22 June. The National Congress, exercising its constitutional powers — and I would like to publicly express my appreciation for the presence here today of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Paraguay, senators and members of Parliament, the President of the Chamber of Deputies, and persons of various political stripes — decided by near-unanimity to remove the then-President from office by means of an impeachment process established under the Constitution.

The Paraguayan Congress sought in that manner to put an end to a very serious political crisis that threatened the country, in which 17 fellow countrymen had already lost their lives, and to avoid further bloodshed and grief on Paraguayan soil. As mandated by the Constitution and owing to my duty as Vice-President, I assumed office as President of the Republic. Since then, in accordance with my oath of office, I have been governing Paraguay peacefully and democratically, fully respecting public freedoms. The Government of Paraguay, along with the overwhelming majority of Paraguayans, takes pride in the fact that there are no political prisoners in the country, that nobody has been exiled, that freedom of the press and freedom of expression are fully guaranteed, and that each and every right enshrined in human rights agreements signed within the framework of the United Nations, as well as in the Organization of American States, is ensured.

Paraguay has normal diplomatic relations with the great majority of the States Members of the United Nations. We guarantee to all of them that Paraguay will continue to work tirelessly in favour of peace and security, the basic pillars of our Organization.

Nonetheless, Paraguay finds itself in a difficult international situation, one created by its neighbours, the members of the Southern Common Market and the Union of South American Nations. Both entities have adopted sanctions against the Republic of Paraguay without allowing it to exercise its right to defend itself, a right that is clearly set forth in the international agreements that are invoked for the application of sanctions. In violation of international treaties, those countries have attempted to become the custodians of Paraguayan democracy, putting aside the principle of non-intervention enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Throughout its history, Paraguay has repeatedly suffered from arrogant interventions in its internal affairs.

The holocaust brought on by the War of the Triple Alliance, stemming from an unjustifiable coalition, has still not faded from the memory of my people. It decimated my country's population and destroyed its economy.

In the short period that my Government has served, our critics have been unable to find a single violation of the agreements that I have mentioned. The great Justo Pastor Benítez, a famous Paraguayan politician, rightly maintained that it is dangerous to be right where there is no justice.

Before humankind's highest Assembly, I clearly state that Paraguay will never accept interference in its internal affairs by foreign Powers. We will continue to build our democracy in accordance with the will of the Paraguayan people, and fully implement it through our freely elected institutions. We are certain that we know how to get through this crucial period with dignity and integrity. We will not be subjugated. We call on members to reflect and work together to find the path towards rebuilding South American integration, which is currently compromised. Peace is built through dialogue, to which we are open.

Those who today wish to become leading actors in the international community will have to acknowledge that that is not possible without regional unity. Leadership is built through respect for international law. That is the only way that we will have a common position on Security Council reform, which is a long-standing wish of the universal institution that embraces us.

In such difficult times for the international community, we will find solutions to our current political and economic difficulties only by putting international institutions on the path for which they were established, namely, to serve the women and men that build humankind's future day by day. Paraguay, a founding member of the Organization, remains committed to that.

The various events in different parts of our planet this past year demonstrate the relevance and true validity of a forum such as the United Nations in the international arena. That is why there is an urgent need for the courageous, innovative and profound reform of its organs, structure and functions. Changes are needed to adapt the Organization so that it can respond with greater effectiveness and agility to an international agenda that is very different from that which existed when the United Nations was conceived. Moreover, it faces a shifting dynamic in the international picture that was impossible to envision at its inception.

That is why Paraguay calls on the international community to strive towards the wonderful international utopia of a universal Organization governed by the strong and the weak, the large and the small, and the rich and the poor, all equal in a great world Assembly. Paraguay believes that it is necessary to insist that the reform process include the gradual elimination of the veto power.

This year, on the twentieth anniversary of the historic United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and known as the Earth Summit, we believe that it is necessary to reaffirm the belief that sustainable development and its economic, social and environmental aspects must be the linchpin of the United Nations focus. The Republic of Paraguay therefore reaffirms its belief in that goal and in the need to maintain the balance between economic development, social development and environmental protection as interdependent pillars of human development.

As the world's largest producer per capita of clean renewable hydroelectric energy, which drives our economy and its industrialization, we will use that energy for the country's development for the benefit of the Paraguayans and foreigners who inhabit our land and shape its future. That energy, which we will use little by little, will be another driver of our well-being.

The issue of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) is an important aspect of Paraguay's foreign policy. The asymmetry and disadvantages of our geographical position have caused and continue to cause a huge problem that can be offset only through international recognition and special and differentiated treatment on the part of the developed economies that seeks to include Paraguay in the globalized world.

In that regard, on 12 September, during the recent fourth Meeting of Trade Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries, a group that Paraguay had the honour of chairing during the biennium 2010-2011, the need for transit States, in the first place, and the international community, as a whole, to duly recognize the comparative disadvantages of our countries in relation to the conditions needed for their development was underscored.

Paraguay wishes to reiterate here its commitment to international peace and security. In the specific context of United Nations peacekeeping operations, it affirms its political willingness to continue contributing human resources to such operations. Regionally, we highlight the progress achieved by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Paraguay increased its deployment to MINUSTAH by more than 100 troops to show its firm commitment to the reconstruction of a brother country devastated by the scourges of nature.

I would also like to underscore the effort and commitment of the Paraguayan military observers in the increasingly difficult situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, where they have remained, even in the most difficult circumstances. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to those soldiers who perform their duties, in many parts of the world, with dedication, hard work and sacrifice in the service of the United Nations. Today, we must all also remember the obligation of Member States to protect and defend the security of diplomatic and consular premises in all countries.

Paraguay is increasingly concerned about the growth in transnational organized crime in its worst manifestations, namely, drug trafficking on a large and a small scale, arms trafficking and trafficking in migrants and in persons, among others. Those transnational crimes stem mainly the social and economic inequality of our peoples. Joint international efforts are needed, therefore, in order to fight such scourges head on. The Government of Paraguay reaffirms its unequivocal commitment to the fight against all activities of criminal organizations and calls for a stronger position on the part of developed countries, where most of the demand associated with those crimes originates.

Paraguay also reaffirms its strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. For that reason, Paraguay, through its Secretariat for the Prevention of the Laundering of Money and Goods and in close cooperation with other national institutions, has made a coordinated effort to bring its legal and normative framework in line with its commitments and with the recommendations made by the international organizations charged with preventing and prosecuting crimes related to money laundering and the financing of terrorism. Laws and resolutions have been passed pursuant to the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF). In February 2012, Paraguay was removed from the FATF grey list and is now, as a result of our efforts, included on the white list, a fact that we are proud of, as a member of our region and in line with our commitment to the fight against money-laundering and the financing of terrorism.

Promoting and building awareness of, and full respect for, human rights worldwide must continue to be one of the unchanging and incontrovertible commitments on our Organization's international agenda. Human rights violations are a scourge that must forever be eradicated from our civilization.

The Government of Paraguay reiterates that the growth of nations can be achieved only through social equality, by prioritizing basic needs such as education, health and land reform. Growth without social development will only result in a world that is more unequal and unjust.

The Paraguayan Government is actively working to build a development model that gives priority to decent work. In that regard we are promoting mechanisms within the framework of a State policy aimed at improving working conditions. They include, first, the creation of a Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security; secondly, the ratification of the Domestic Workers Convention No.189 of the International Labour Organization, adopted in 2011 by the International Labour Conference in order to improve the working conditions of thousands of domestic workers in Paraguay; and thirdly, the implementation of an employment policy for young people through a bill aimed at enabling young people to enter the workforce, which has been partially approved by the National Congress.

Since its beginning, my Government has maintained its belief in and commitment to making inexorable progress towards equal opportunities and rights for all of Paraguay's inhabitants. In that regard, we have never faltered in the constant struggle for full social, economic, political and cultural rights for women. As evidence of those firm beliefs, soon after assuming its duties, my Government decided to upgrade the Secretariat for Women's Issues to an executive ministry, in accordance with United Nations recommendations. Finally, in that respect, I must mention our satisfaction with, and full commitment to, Paraguay's election for a new term as member of the Commission on the Status of Women for 2013-2017.

The Government of Paraguay, which I have proudly led since the end of June, now has a historic democratic obligation to organize the general elections scheduled for 21 April 2013 and to guarantee that they are peaceful, transparent and exemplary. When the next President takes office, on 15 August 2013, the soundness of Paraguayan democracy will be confirmed. At that time I will look into the eyes of my countrymen and those of foreigners who live in our country and shape our future alongside us and will be able to say: mission accomplished. I ask God and the Virgin to help us and to bless us so that all Paraguayans together can move towards the future that we want.

**The Acting President**: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Paraguay for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Luis Federico Franco Gómez, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Bujar Nishani, President of the Republic of Albania**

**The Acting President**: The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Albania.

*Mr. Bujar Nishani, President of the Republic of Albania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President**: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bujar Nishani, President of the Republic of Albania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Nishani**: We gather here every year to share our analysis, our views and comments on the course of world events. We also take this opportunity to share our concerns and to meet, interact and try to offer our best commitment to finding appropriate solutions to current and future challenges.

A year has passed since the last session, and the world has continued to change. Development and economic growth in many countries have raised hundreds of millions of people above the poverty line. Societies throughout the world are taking a stand today, demanding more rights and asking for effective political participation. Democracy, human rights and increased participation by women in public and social life have all globally improved. Despite unprecedented global awareness, climate change remains a major source of concern. The continuing deterioration of the global economic climate is also a permanent source of anxiety everywhere. Threats to peace and security in various parts of the world show how far we still are from achieving the global security we want. It is therefore only fair that we expect the United Nations, the Organization we have placed at the centre of our international architecture, to be more responsive, efficient, effective and transparent.

This year Albania celebrates the one hundredth anniversary of its independence. As we mark that important date and survey our history for the past 10 decades, we note with satisfaction that for more than half of that time the State of Albania has enjoyed successful cooperation and active participation in the life of the United Nations. Our commitment has grown over the years and has embraced almost every aspect of United Nations activity, including peacekeeping operations. In recent years we have devoted particular attention to the ongoing efforts to reform the Organization's system. As that system has developed and its activities have become more complex, the need for greater coherence and efficiency within the Organization as a whole has grown pressing. That is particularly evident in the area of United Nations development assistance.

In June, as one of the pilot countries for the Delivering as One approach, we hosted the fifth High-level Intergovernmental Conference on Delivering as One. The Tirana Conference adopted an outcome document with concrete and, we hope, valuable recommendations in the light of the approaching quadrennial comprehensive policy review. We know now that what started as a test idea has come a long way in a relatively short time. A growing number of countries are looking more clearly and closely at the benefits of seeing the United Nations operate and implement its assistance programmes with more coherence and efficiency. Delivering as One has convincingly shown in practice how the operational activities of the United Nations can be delivered with greater efficiency and how the system can do more and better and more with less in its efforts to help countries reach nationally and internationally agreed development goals.

I am proud to represent a country and society widely known for their broadmindedness, tolerance and acceptance of others. Albanians are probably unique to our region in that, despite having endured centuries of

difficulties in our history, we have always preserved and cherished the values of freedom and respect for the other that are fundamental to the modern concept of human rights. Albanians' respect for one another's rights and individuality is expressed first and foremost in an exemplary religious harmony. They have shown an outstanding acceptance of, and respect for, other cultures, ethnicities and civilizations, and have devoted special care and attention to those who have come seeking safe refuge from the horrors of war. Albanians have risked their own lives and far outspent their economic capacity in order to rescue and save those in need who came knocking at their door.

It is against that backdrop that Albania remains a strong believer in dialogue among civilizations and continues to engage actively in bridging the differences among the wider membership on issues pertaining to the human rights agenda. That is why Albania, which currently presides over the Council of Europe, has chosen "United in diversity" as its theme. The dialogue among different cultures and civilizations should be seen as an ongoing process requiring dedication, goodwill and care. We cannot allow the sporadic reckless actions of disruptive groups to prevent us from making a genuine effort to reach a better understanding of one another in a world that is becoming more globalized every day.

Although we were saddened and embittered by the worthless video that deliberately targets what Muslims everywhere consider sacred, Albanians, Muslims and Christians alike have expressed their indignation by simply ignoring such nonsense. We regret that the reaction to it in some parts of the world was different, used instead to fuel blind violence by angry, hopeless crowds, with fatal consequences. We must be clear: any form of terrorism or extremist act on the part of isolated, malevolent groups should never be confused with the position or identified with the attitude of an entire society or Government. No legitimate anger can excuse illegitimate violent acts that Governments, societies and political and religious leaders should firmly oppose. We condemn with indignation the terrorist act against American Consulate staff and premises in Libya and demand that the perpetrators be punished. We also condemn any act of violent protest against the Western embassies, whose mission it is to promote understanding and cooperation among countries and nations.

With a foreign policy based on peace and good relations with all nations, its modest but important contribution to international missions aimed at safeguarding peace and human rights through a policy of good neighbourliness, as well as its efforts to play a moderate and constructive role in the region, Albania has become a direct contributor to stability and security on the regional and global levels. We are determined to maintain and further build on that record.

Today, Albania participates in peacekeeping missions in several international operations within the framework of the United Nations and other regional security organizations, including in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq and more. My country acknowledges and supports every effort towards global peace and security and will continue to support the efforts of the United Nations, NATO and other actors to promote peace, stability and security around the world.

Global peace and security continue to be challenged by tyranny and oppression in various parts of the world. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the ferocious repression of the freedom-loving people of Syria, whose blood is being shed through the primitive attacks on the part of a regime that has irretrievably forfeited its legitimate right to lead and represent the Syrian people. Let me join all those calling on the Security Council to step up and comply with its duty, as mandated in the United Nations Charter, to preserve peace and security. It is hard to believe that one can remain indifferent to events such as the terrible ones that have been unfolding every day in Syria for a year and a half, with tens of thousands of human losses and the widespread, deliberate destruction and suffering that have already set the country back by decades.

Have we not already learned the hard lessons of similar mistakes in the past tragedies in Rwanda and Bosnia?

Albania fully supports the peace process between Palestine and Israel. Albania reiterates its position in support of the two-State solution: a secure State of Israel and a viable State of Palestine, living side by side with each other in accordance with United Nations resolutions and the road map. The peoples of both Palestine and Israel are exhausted by that never-ending conflict, and their leaders should shoulder the responsibility of undertaking a legitimate quest for freedom and peace, with long-term vision and goodwill, and against extremists. The world longs to see the peace process in the Middle East shift from a

pattern of stagnation and become an inspiring example of difficult yet indispensable compromises.

Albania remains deeply worried by the Iranian nuclear programme, which continues to raise serious questions as to its nature instead of providing answers and guarantees, as requested over the years. We must prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear threat.

In November this year, my country will celebrate the centenary of its independence. We will commemorate a century that saw a diversity of events, which were not always among the happiest ones.

Many have described the Albanian people as survivors of harsh chapters of history. They are not wrong: the Albanian people have suffered unwanted wars, forced movement from their lands, assaults and attempts to annihilate them, unjust partitions and, during the second half of the twentieth century, bravely resisted five decades of communism. All this has come at a stiff price. Today we look to the future with hope, in a spirit of deliverance, and with strong confidence that the coming century will be marked by continuous peace, economic progress, and cultural and intellectual revitalization.

Our region, which was once a troubled hotspot and a sick area of Europe, has been profoundly and positively transformed. Six new States have been born out of the former Yugoslavia in the course of the past two decades.

We all know that it has not been easy, and we all know why. But what matters most is that everywhere in the region societies have evolved, the ghosts of the past have ceded their place to new realities, and people, in particular the young generation, are more than ever turned towards the future.

Let me point out here that the establishment of the independent State of Kosovo five years ago has become an important factor of peace and stability in the South-east European region. It has become stronger and overcome all kinds of obstacles created by those who still cannot accept reality and face the truth. As time passes, independent Kosovo is being recognized and accepted by an increasing number of States — close to half of the States Members of the United Nations.

The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo (see A/64/881), rendered in 2010 upon specific request from Serbia, clearly ruled that the independence of Kosovo was in conformity with the international law. Just a few days ago, the Republic of Kosovo reached another level of State consolidation with the end of the phase of independence supervised by the international community.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the authorities of Kosovo on their continued progress in building and strengthening a democratic State and a multi-ethnic society, and I call on all those countries that have not yet recognized Kosovo to consider a review and assessment of that irreversible reality in the South-eastern European region. The recognition of Kosovo is an act of justice for a people that has suffered for too long, and represents a net contribution to peace and stability in the Balkans.

We have already heard, and we are prepared to listen once again to the same old redundant arguments from Serbia regarding Kosovo. What war failed to do, propaganda will not achieve either. While Serbia's leaders speak of partition and the redrawing of borders, and while they make troubling statements denying genocide in Srebrenica, one is right to ask whether the past continues to loom over the present there, obscuring reality and distorting their vision of the future.

Albania has maintained strong positive economic growth despite the impact of the global financial and economic crisis. The pursuit of macroprudential policies and well-anchored structural reforms focusing on privatization, fiscal probity, trade liberalization, the business climate and the energy and financial sectors have enabled Albania's economy to become the most resilient of the economies of South-east Europe. During the period from 2007 to 2012, average economic growth has been 5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), peaking in 2008 at 8 per cent of GDP.

Since 2008, Albania has had a flat tax of 10 per cent; corporate tax has decreased from 25 per cent to 10 per cent; personal income tax has dropped from 23 per cent to 10 per cent; and dozens of fees have simply been eliminated.

*The Global Competitiveness Report 2011-2012*, published by the World Economic Forum, ranks Albania seventy-eighth out of 142 countries/economies. The World Bank report *Doing Business 2012: Doing Business in a More Transparent World* ranks Albania eighty-second out of 183 economies in terms of ease of doing business. In the areas of getting credit and of protecting investors, Albania ranks twenty-fourth

and sixteenth, respectively, putting it among the top reformer countries.

On our road towards sustained development, progress and prosperity, we remain fully engaged and committed to carrying out all reforms and taking all of the measures required to continue successfully on the path to European Union integration. This is not an alternative but a long-term choice carefully pursued over the years, and we are determined to make it happen.

In the weeks ahead, we expect a favourable decision by the Council of Ministers of the European Union on our bid for the status of candidate country to the European Union. That merit-based decision will constitute another milestone in Albania's journey to European integration and will place our commitments and our responsibilities at a higher stage of the process.

In conclusion, let me assure the Assembly that Albania remains committed to international cooperation and is determined to continue to offer its contribution to advancing peace, freedom and security, and respect for human rights, fighting poverty, promoting sustainable development and prosperity, and, last but not least, protecting the environment.

**The Acting President**: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the President of the Republic of Albania for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Bujar Nishani, President of the Republic of Albania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

## Address by Mr. Mohamed Yousef El-Magariaf, President of the General National Congress of Libya

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the General National Congress of Libya.

*Mr. Mohamed Yousef El-Magariaf, President of the General National Congress of Libya, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President**: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Yousef El-Magariaf, President of the General National Congress of Libya, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President El-Magariaf** (*spoke in Arabic; English text provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I am pleased to congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I would like to commend Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for his leadership as President at the sixty-sixth session. I also wish to express our profound gratitude and appreciation to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his valuable efforts to achieve the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Three years ago, a despot who ruled my country for 42 years with tyranny and oppression stood at this very rostrum and tore up a copy of the Charter, saying that he did not recognize the authority of the document. Today, I am standing on the very same rostrum to assure the Assembly of my delegation's support and respect for the Charter.

Today, I stand before the Assembly and the whole world to apologize for all the harm and the crimes committed by that despot against so many innocent people, as well as to apologize for the extortion and terrorism he inflicted on so many States. I want to assure the Organization that the Libyan people are determined to build a State that respects its neighbours, its international obligations and human rights, and that believes that genuine peace in the world will not be realized unless the conscience of every individual is brimming with peace. Libya will be a land of peace and security and a strong force for peace.

I am speaking today before this international gathering to convey the greetings of the Libyan people, whose revolt on 17 February 2011 turned into a comprehensive, explosive revolution that shook the very foundations of the regime of the despot Muammar Al-Qadhafi, who declared that he would burn and destroy Libya and make it swim in a sea of blood. He killed thousands of civilians, recruited mercenaries from everywhere, assaulted peoples' honour, ordered his militias and mercenaries to rape minors, and destroyed cities. However, our people did not kneel; they did not back down. Thousands of martyrs were lost among the wounded and missing. The price of freedom was paid in blood, lives, amputated limbs and lost youth.

In this forum, on behalf of the Libyan people, I salute the United Nations system, which stood with our people, with the will of freedom against blood lust and annihilation, and adopted Security Council resolutions

1970 (2011) and 1973 (2011) to protect the innocent people in Libya from crimes against humanity and violations of human rights.

I stand before the Assembly today representing the Libyan people, who are building the institutions of democracy after the fall of dictatorship. The whole world has witnessed the first free, transparent elections in Libya, when the General National Congress was elected and I was honoured to be elected as its President. The world, through the United Nations, has given us complete, genuine support for that achievement.

In our revolution of freedom and in the challenge of establishing democracy, the conscience of the world was with us, both in deeds and in thoughts. Support was offered from everybody and from everywhere.

Among those offering help was Ambassador Chris Stevens, a voice of reason and conscience, a man of love and a messenger of friendship, who came to Libya after the outbreak of the revolution for freedom. He touched people's emotions in Benghazi and travelled from Tripoli to the western mountains and back and all across Libya. Chris Stevens spoke with everyone in Arabic; he always smiled and showed the utmost concern. This humane diplomat has found his place in the consciousness and emotions of the Libyan people. It was a day of sadness throughout Libya when he was assassinated, along with three of his aides. We would like to express our deepest condolences to the friendly American people for the grave loss. It was a loss for Libya as it was a loss for the United States of America.

We assure the Government and the people of the United States that this tragedy will only increase our solidarity to entrench the hopes and objectives in which Ambassador Chris Stevens believed. We will defeat the schemes of the backward terrorists, who do not represent Libya or Islam. Islam is a religion of tolerance, peace and love. As President Obama said from this rostrum two days ago, "our future will be determined by people like Chris Stevens, and not by his killers" (*A/67/PV.6, p.11*).

In that context, I would like to express my condolences to the Libyan people, particularly the people of Misrata, on the death of Imran Juma Shaban, who joined the long list of martyrs some five days ago.

I would like to express our profound appreciation for the understanding shown by the United States Administration following that incident, and to assure it that my country is determined to pursue the perpetrators and bring them to justice. We will spare no effort to strengthen the necessary protection for the diplomatic and consular missions and all guests and ensure the safety of their staff and facilities. That tragic incident does not at all represent the feelings of the Libyan people, who are known for their moderation, hospitality and gratitude. Perhaps the massive demonstrations condemning that abominable crime that took place in Benghazi and other Libyan cities best represent the genuine feelings of the Libyan people and their total rejection of all forms of violence and extremism.

Libya will never become an incubator for radical extremist groups and will remain a peaceful Muslim country where moderation prevails. The new Libya will be based on democracy, openness, transparency, combating corruption and empowering women and youth. The new Libya will be by, and for, one and all.

Meanwhile, it would be remiss of me not to condemn the campaigns against Islam and to defame the Prophet Muhammad. Such campaigns foment hatred and aim to provoke tensions among civilizations. They go beyond the concept of freedom of expression and opinion and require that the General Assembly adopt a legal document to criminalize the defamation of all religious symbols and figures. We Muslims have an absolute belief in the unity of humankind and solidarity among all human beings. We express our support for the dialogue among religions and for cooperation, tolerance and eternal humanitarianumanitarian values and ideals. My country therefore supports all efforts carried out within the framework of the dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions under the United Nations and relevant international organizations.

Since the revolution of 17 of February 2011, Libya has witnessed many changes due to the uprising of its people against social injustice and political tyranny. It has not only achieved a change of the tyrant regime but has progressed towards a genuine democratic regime based on respect for and promotion of human rights, political pluralism and peaceful transfer of power, as well as on commitment to the principles and provisions of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The Assembly may have followed the sequential political developments that Libya experienced during the past few months along the path to democratization. Those include the rebuilding of State institutions;

the election of the General National Congress, which will, through a constituent committee, draft Libya's permanent constitution; and the formation of the first interim Government following elections that were commended by international observers as fair, democratic and transparent.

We shall work to rebuild, reorganize and reform State institutions, primarily the police, the national army and the judiciary. Various programmes and plans are being implemented towards disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating the former revolutionaries within the ministries of defense and interior and other State institutions.

For the first time since independence, political parties have emerged on the political stage, as have freedom of the press and expression, unconditional freedom to demonstrate, freedom of assembly and freedom to establish civil institutions, trade unions and intellectual, political and social organizations without restrictions. That has led to free dialogue and the active participation of all segments of the people throughout the country.

For four decades, the former regime flagrantly violated human rights through torture, detention without trial, extrajudicial killing, forced disappearance and ill-treatment of citizens and violations of their dignity. The outbreak of the 17 February revolution in the form of peaceful protest was confronted by the security brigades of the former regime with bullets and brutal repression, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

The Human Rights Council decided to suspend Libya's membership in the Council and formed an international fact-finding committee that voiced the condemnation of the international community of such violations. The Council certified violations of human rights by the regime's forces and by some revolutionaries, which has required the new Libyan authorities to give the human rights file particular attention and to take many specific measures.

Some may wonder whether the Arab Spring was worthy of support. To them I say, would it have been better for the corrupt, dictatorial regimes to continue for decades more with their practices of tyranny, oppression, injustice, arbitrary treatment, corruption, exploitation, and violations of the most basic human rights? Should they have been allowed to continue pillaging the wealth of their peoples, pushing some of the oppressed towards extremism or a certain agenda incompatible with peace and security, an agenda that promoted violence and terror to achieve its objectives?

Democracy did not prevail in France a year, or even a decade, after the French Revolution. That pattern has been repeated in other States that have gained their freedom. A period of liberation was followed by stages of instability and a sometimes long and bloody civil war before those States were able to achieve stability and security and to build their democratic institutions.

At the current stage of building the new Libya, we are facing extremely serious challenges that threaten national and regional security. Some are a result of illegal activities by the sons of Al-Qadhafi and certain elements of the former regime who are being sought to face justice but have unfortunately found refuge in neighbouring countries and some other countries from where they carry out criminal activities that threaten security and stability in Libya.

But we in Libya also face other security threats — trafficking in drugs and psychotropic substances, illegal immigration and smuggling and trafficking of weapons. As the Assembly knows, the nature and scope of such threats to national and border security require a bilateral and multilateral response that promotes and strengthens national efforts. Therefore, last March my country hosted the Regional Ministerial Conference on Border Security in the North African and Sahelian Region, which resulted in the adoption of the Tripoli plan of action. The plan establishes common mechanisms and structures for cooperation and exchange of information, consultations, experience and communications on border security.

Among our national priorities is Libya's right to restitution of moneys that were pillaged from the State treasury and secreted outside the country. Those funds have been used to finance criminal activities and operations in order to destabilize the country and threaten its national security. That has had an impact upon neighbouring countries as well. We therefore call on all our friends and on States to allow us to recover Libyan moneys, investments and property located in other countries, particularly in some countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia, where those funds have been subject to coercive measures by some Governments.

In that context, we call upon all States of the world to cooperate in combating corruption and money laundering. We call upon financial institutions,

particularly those located in Western countries and some island States, to shoulder their responsibilities and not accept suspicious funds, particularly from Third World dictators who are bleeding the wealth of their peoples and hiding those funds under fictitious company names.

In March 2010, Global Financial Integrity issued a report estimating that the gross offshore deposits were $10 trillion. We look forward to the signing and ratification of an anti-corruption convention by 130 States. We believe that that would promote cooperation among States to combat corruption and bring about the restitution of stolen funds.

I would now like to pay tribute to the great contribution made by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, previously headed by Mr. Ian Martin, despite the many challenges and difficulties that were natural and to be expected in the transitional phase. We also welcome the appointment of Mr. Tarek Mitri as the new head of the Mission. We wish him every success and look forward to further cooperation. We are committed to providing all the necessary assistance to him and the Mission.

The new Libya undertakes to respect all of its commitments contained in the international instruments and covenants on disarmament and the maintenance of international peace and security. We are fully prepared to cooperate transparently and sincerely with the international community to support efforts, both regional and international, to implement the provisions of international conventions and protocols and to create an international environment that would foster progress towards definitively eliminating weapons of mass destruction. We are also determined to review all other international instruments to which we are not yet party and take the appropriate decisions thereon as soon as the permanent constitution is adopted and a Government and parliament are elected.

We condemn Israel's measures designed to Judaize occupied lands and its violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. The international community must assume its responsibilities by taking strong, urgent measures to put an end to Israeli aggression and ensure the full protection of Palestinians. It must come up with a radical solution to the question of Palestine through a just and lasting settlement that includes Israel's withdrawal from all occupied lands and the return of all Palestinian refugees to their homes, as well as the establishment of the independent State of Palestine with Al-Quds as its capital, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions.

The suffering of the brotherly Syrian people is unimaginable. The regime in power is violently repressing its citizens, shedding their blood and attacking their dignity, and has thus lost its legitimacy. In order to put an end to such a tragedy, Libya urges the Security Council to act promptly, in accordance with the principle of the responsibility to protect, to take immediate action to end all forms of murder, violence and destruction, find a way out of the crisis through a peaceful transition of power, and fulfil the legitimate demands of the Syrian people. This can be achieved only through consensus among members of the Security Council and support for the efforts of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi.

Libya condemns the social and political injustice, harassment and killings being inflicted on the Muslim minority in Myanmar on the basis of ethnicity and religion. That is a flagrant violation of human rights and constitutes crimes against humanity. We call on all relevant human rights institutions to immediately intervene and put an end to the tragedy. We underline the necessity of forming an international committee of inquiry to identify those responsible for such violence and killings, bring the perpetrators to justice and ensure that victims are duly compensated and refugees returned safely to their homes.

States Members of the United Nations have convened every year at the General Assembly ever since the Organization was established in order to reflect on the purposes and principles set out in its Charter. We have achieved much, but many challenges remain, such as reforming the United Nations, eliminating weapons of mass destruction, reducing poverty, ignorance and disease and wars and armed conflicts, fighting terrorism and organized crime, protecting the environment, achieving sustainable development, respecting human rights, in particular the rights of women, and ensuring the rule of law and combating racism, hatred and fanaticism.

Libya wishes to stress its affinity with Africa and the importance of shifting its policies towards, and relations with, Africa and the world — which were once based on personal whims and acts of extortion — to policies and relations firmly grounded in the best interests of

all peoples. The new Libya dissociates itself from the repugnant past and extends its hands in freedom and friendship to build new relationships based on mutual respect and fruitful cooperation.

In conclusion, let me wish the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session full success in solving the issues on its agenda. I express the hope that a spirit of solidarity and cooperation will prevail so that we may create a better world, one blessed with security and stability.

**The Acting President**: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the President of the General National Congress of Libya for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Mohamed Yousef El-Magariaf, President of the General National Congress of Libya, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Agenda item 8** (*continued*)

**General debate**

**Address by Mr. Thérence Sinunguruza, Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi**

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi.

*Mr. Thérence Sinunguruza, Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President**: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Thérence Sinunguruza, Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

**Mr. Sinunguruza** (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): It is a great pleasure for me to address the representatives here today and to express my congratulations to Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, and to his cabinet as well. I also thank his predecessor, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for his excellent work during his presidency. In addition, I extend my appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his work for the good and well-being of Member States and their peoples.

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to speak from this rostrum about current issues of great importance to my country and the world. It is a pleasure especially because Burundi is right now at a decisive and historic turning point. What I have to say Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, also spoke of last year at the Assembly's sixty-sixth session. A major turn of events has placed a special stamp on our country's history since independence. Democratically elected institutions now serve out the terms entrusted to them by the people in peace, and then, at the end of their tenure, give way to others, also democratically elected.

Over two years ago, in 2010, Burundi organized democratic elections for the second time since 2005, from which were born our current republican institutions, which operate with legitimacy in a restored climate of peace and security. That development gives us great satisfaction, and the Burundian people have every reason to be proud of it. Indeed, whereas my country faced crises on multiple fronts, under which the people suffered economic depletion, social degradation and political discord, seriously demoralizing them, those same people are now steadily getting back on their feet and rediscovering hope as they look to the future. That positive trend demonstrates conclusively a complete break with the spirals of violence and instability that have for decades been our ongoing lot.

Thanks to the collective efforts, strength and spirit of the Burundian people, as well as to the support of our partners, I can confirm here and now that the policies begun in 2005 and carried on after 2010 have produced most encouraging results in many areas. As I said earlier, in the political sphere our country has held democratic elections twice in the recent past, in 2005 and 2010. We have established democratic institutions — the executive branch, the National Assembly and the Senate — all of which are representative of the various elements of Burundi's population, in conformity with the ethnic and gender balances agreed to in the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, which have been incorporated into the Constitution governing Burundians today. I take pleasure in pointing out that our Senate's composition shows a gender parity such that out of all senates worldwide Burundi's places second in women's representation. That is clearly a significant and bold step forward, because, rather than settle for the minimum set out in the Constitution, our Government voluntarily made the deliberate choice to go further, to ensure that the female majority in the population is represented meaningfully in the country's institutions.

In its determined drive towards change, the Government subsequently established an independent

national commission on human rights and an ombudsman's office. It initiated a zero-tolerance policy designed to eradicate corruption and misuse of public funds, a scourge that has ravaged Burundian society for several years, and also set up adequate enforcement mechanisms. We still have a way to go, as is the case in many other countries, but the structures to get there are firmly in place. In October 2011 the Government adopted a national good governance and anti-corruption strategy for 2011-2015. Also, Government officials, including those at high levels, have signed performance contracts, laying the groundwork for a culture of accountability, which is essential to democratic systems. The members of the Administration and high-level officials are periodically evaluated based on those contracts. If they live up to agreed performance standards they are retained, but otherwise they are replaced.

The Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement calls for transitional justice mechanisms. We are working towards a transitional justice system that carefully and rigorously balances national reconciliation requirements and those of justice. We need a mechanism that banishes the demons of the past and at the same time affords no opportunity for any type of vengeance or the settling of old scores; in other words, a mechanism to establish the truth and to ensure that there is no recurrence of the acts in question. National consultations were held in 2009, and the related report has been made public. A technical committee was established with a mandate to pave the way for a truth and reconciliation commission. That committee proposed a methodology in its final report, which was submitted through the proper channels in October 2011. The Government had hoped to establish the commission in January 2012, but that decision had to be postponed for technical reasons owing to the fact that further consultations were required, along with specific proposals on the commission's mandate and composition, the selection criteria for its members and matters related to its operating budget.

Besides those achievements in the political sphere, the Government undertook a vast social construction project that yielded positive results. Measures providing free education for children of primary school age enabled millions of little Burundians to attend school, while free medical care for pregnant women, nursing mothers and children under five years of age significantly improved maternal and child health care and will help us to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in that regard in the near future. Also, with the participation of the population in communal labour, 2,024 schools, 80 health centres and more than 2,000 potable-water wells were built in just three years.

With respect to socioeconomic development, Burundi is continuing to improve its basic economic infrastructure, including the management of public finances, an improved business climate and good governance. In addition, significant progress has been made with respect to the gradual and orderly return of displaced persons and the repatriation of refugees. All those efforts have taken place within the Strategic Framework for Growth and Poverty Reduction, Vision 2025 and the MDGs. Of the total of 800,000 counted in the census of 2000-2001, all have returned to our country with the exception of 37,000 from the Mtabila camp, who are expected to return by 31 December. Many internally displaced persons have already returned to their homes. We have just finished a profiling survey of those who remain on site, which, in the light of their expressed wishes, will determine the most appropriate and humane resolution of their situation.

The social and economic reintegration of former combatants has yet to be completed and represents a genuine security risk. While it is true that there have been a few isolated instances of insecurity here and there in the country, that is not unique to Burundi. Banditry, which has taken place on a small scale in Burundi, also occurs elsewhere, in many countries. The Government is determined to stamp out all forms of criminality, including armed robbery. It considers security the sine qua non of all social and economic progress, which is why it has embarked on reforms in that regard. The professionalization of the defence and security forces and of the justice system to guarantee the rights of both citizens and foreigners on our soil are among the measures that the Government has written into its programme and will continue to promote as the country moves forward.

In the area of regional integration, an intragovernmental committee has been established to develop a national strategy for regional integration, with the goal of enabling Burundi to take best advantage of its participation in subregional entities and reducing the deficits and disadvantages that stem from belonging to non-regional organizations.

The Strategic Framework for Growth and Poverty Reduction has reached an advanced stage. The

Government and the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission have made visible progress in a number of areas, as indicated in the outcome of the fifth review of the Peacebuilding Commission, issued on 26 April 2011. Positive results were noted in the areas of political and institutional peacebuilding issues, good governance, human rights, economic issues, vulnerable groups and regional integration, as described earlier.

After this brief survey of the internal situation of my country, I now turn to Burundi's role and position regarding certain international matters. With respect to Burundi's participation in peacekeeping operations, I would like to say that Burundi was one of the two countries to take part in the African Union Mission in Somalia, and that it is pleased with the work accomplished by its soldiers in that context. As the Secretary-General has already done, my country commends the adoption, in August, of the provisional Constitution of Somalia by the National Constituent Assembly in Mogadishu. It congratulates and encourages the Somali delegates and leaders with respect to the new developments under way, aimed at normalizing that country's situation, and to their commitment to ending the transition period and establishing new political institutions that represent all Somalis. Burundi stands ready to share with the Somalis our experience on the question of national reconciliation and in training a national republican army.

With respect to the security situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, along with the other members of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, confirms its strong commitment to the terms of the pact of 15 December 2006 and to its related protocols guaranteeing security, stability and development. We are also a signatory to the declarations agreed by the heads of State and Government of the member States of that organization in Addis Ababa on 15 July, and in Kampala on 7 and 8 August and 7 and 8 September. Along with the other countries of the region, Burundi remains determined to seek solutions to that conflict through existing regional arrangements and in accordance with decisions already taken by the countries of the subregion within the framework of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

The Assembly will have noted in the course of my statement that the Government of Burundi has made undeniable progress. Still, major challenges remain, not least of them the maintenance of economic growth. Despite the unfavourable international financial and economic context, Burundi, with the support of its partners, must keep its head above water. It must increase its economic growth with the aim of implementing its economic and social development projects. It goes without saying that lack of growth, along with poverty, means fewer schools, fewer hospitals and less progress in the areas of energy and transportation infrastructure — in short, less development for the country and its people. No leader worthy of the title would bequeath such a disastrous economic situation to future generations.

That is why, despite the troubling international economic outlook, guidance and support are more than ever necessary for economies as weak as ours in Burundi. However sustainable it may be at the national level, our economy is still very much dependent on the global economy. I remain convinced that, with the will, commitment and vigour of the people of Burundi, supported by our friends, the scale of our political and socioeconomic gains will continue to expand. For its part, the Government will spare no effort to harness, coordinate and collaborate with the efforts of all parties to fight hand in hand for people's well-being and prosperity, in Burundi and around the world.

I would like to conclude by welcoming the actions taken by the United Nations, which over the 67 years of its existence has moved the world forward at an ever-accelerating pace. I would also like to see the institutional changes envisaged for the Organization take the interests of all Member States into consideration, with all stakeholders taking part in the reform and updating of the system..

Finally, I wish the President of the General Assembly every success throughout his term of office. Long live international cooperation! Long live the United Nations! Long live Burundi!

**The Acting President**: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Thérence Sinunguruza, Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Danny Faure, Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles**

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now hear an addresss by the Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles.

*Mr. Danny Faure, Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President**: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Danny Faure, Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

**Mr. Faure** (Seychelles): In the modern world, the pace of change, whether political, social or economic, challenges our ability to react in a constructive, sustainable and just manner. And in the face of change, the role of the General Assembly becomes even more important, as the President of the General Assembly has reminded us. We look to the United Nations — our United Nations and our General Assembly — to help us find the common ground needed for the resolution of the big questions of our time. We can truly be a "G-193", as our President has previously remarked.

As an oceanic island nation, Seychelles understands intrinsically that the development of our region depends upon being able to defuse conflict and tension through diplomacy and on defining a framework to properly share all the opportunities that our ocean offers us. In the Indian Ocean, we are particularly concerned with two issues that challenge the proper application of the rule of law in a sustainable manner: the continued problem of maritime piracy and the resolution of the political crisis in Madagascar.

Piracy fundamentally alters our relationship with our ocean. Piracy instils fear and uncertainty. We have two compatriots still being held captive in Somalia, and, as long as they remain separated from their families, our ocean represents risk for our nation, rather than the opportunity that it should. Establishing the rule of law in Somalia is obviously the only true long-term and sustainable solution to piracy. We welcome the moves in Somalia and by the international community to strengthen those efforts.

Seychelles is already working with the central Government of Somalia, as well as the regions of Somaliland and Puntland, to be able to transfer prosecuted prisoners to serve their sentences in their country of origin. This is a key part of building the rule of law in Somalia. More resources are needed, however, to accelerate the building of appropriate infrastructure in those parts of Somalia where stability has been established. We must transform fear and uncertainty into hope and optimism in Somalia itself, as well as in the Indian Ocean.

Seychelles has committed itself to ending the impunity associated with piracy. Piracy has become a global business, operated by a transnational criminal network. Seychelles, in partnership with the Government of the United Kingdom and other international parties, is in the process of setting up a regional anti-piracy prosecution and intelligence centre. The success of this initiative will depend on strong international cooperation. We count on all our partners to work with us to ensure a true long-term solution for this issue.

(*spoke in French*)

The Indian Ocean Commission, which Seychelles is currently chairing, recognizes the work of the United Nations in favour of peace, democracy and human rights, in the interests of the people of its five member States. The crisis facing Madagascar is truly testing the country. It is plunging the population into great economic and social difficulties, and is affecting the entire region. The Seychelles presidency of the Commission continues supporting the implementation of the road map developed by the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In that context, it organized two meetings between Marc Ravalomanana, the former President, and Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Transition, in Seychelles, with the dual mediation of Presidents James Michel and Jacob Zuma, head of the SADC troika. Those talks, convened at the recommendation of the most recent SADC Summit, enable us today to look forward to useful and relevant actions for a return to constitutional order in Madagascar, in keeping with the electoral timetable drawn up by the United Nations and Madagascar's Independent National Electoral Commission.

In that regard, we should like to express our thanks to the transitional Government, which has confirmed its contribution to the financing of the elections, in accordance with the recommendations of the United Nations. This is also the time to call on all international partners to help ensure fair, transparent and equitable elections in that country, which is anxious to regain its place on the international stage. Through elections Madagascar will return to the rule of law, and it is

through the rule of law in Madagascar that we will be able to depend on sustainable development in the Indian Ocean.

(*spoke in English*)

Respect for the rule of law is also about ensuring that conditions are in place for equity and fairness in the international system as a whole. Small island developing States (SIDS) are too often on the periphery of most international decision-making bodies. Seychelles is proposing that SIDS be considered as offering unique opportunities for testing innovative policies and technologies that can benefit all humankind. In the fight against climate change, SIDS could be at the forefront of groundbreaking solutions.

For example, the Global Island Partnership, co-chaired by Seychelles, Palau and Grenada, has proposed considering debt cancellation for SIDS to enable them to better prepare for climate change adaptation. A large number of SIDS have debt-to-gross-domestic-product ratios in excess of 100 per cent, and such debt forgiveness would give them more flexibility within their own budgets to prepare to face climate change, and thus protect some of the most environmentally sensitive zones on the planet.

With regard to the high volatility of international fuel prices, SIDS can strengthen their resilience through investment in renewable energy. We warmly welcome the Sustainable Energy for All initiative championed by the Secretary-General, and we commit our support to making it a success. While the latest technology in renewable energy often represents a significant capital outlay, by developing pilot projects in SIDS we can potentially create economies based on 100 per cent renewable energy that can then be replicated on a larger scale.

Finally, it is very important that consideration be given to how to better support SIDS within the international trading system. Trade-based support for SIDS could easily be established without disruption or distortion of the global flow of goods and services. Islands are particularly reliant on open access to trade with as many countries as possible. In the context of the current challenges to food security, we urge that all barriers affecting trade with islands, including the economic embargo on Cuba, be lifted, since they serve only to increase the inherent challenges associated with trading from a position of insularity. As an island State, we are aware that the ocean must connect us, not divide us. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development has given new momentum to the concept of the blue economy.

We are also very aware that the ocean will always be a shared space. As an archipelago, we are privileged to be custodians of that space. This year, for the first time in the history of the United Nations, Seychelles and Mauritius, two neighbouring SIDS, have agreed on joint management of an area of extended continental shelf of 3,000 square kilometres. That means that we are sharing the space for the benefit of our two peoples' development. We are sharing the responsibility and the opportunity. We believe that all nations, large or small, must contribute to making this planet a better world to live in.

Seychelles recently announced its intention to stand for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council in the year 2017, subject to endorsement by the African Union. We are doing so because we believe that the voices of all nations matter, whether they are large or small, rich or poor. As the smallest African nation, we keenly understand that we need to fight for Africa's economic independence. We are committed to the ideals of the African Union, on the basis of which we attained our political freedom. Now more than ever we must invest in Africa's economic freedom. We must create the means by which Africa's share of trade and financial power can increase at a faster rate. We must empower African institutions. Seychelles adds its voice to the call for more investment in the African Development Bank, including by African nations themselves, by investing their reserves in it.

We must also foster peace on our continent by leading efforts to find solutions to our problems, such as in Somalia, Madagascar and elsewhere in Africa. As a small island developing State, we have a greater understanding than ever of the ways in which our planet is under threat from climate change, and of the need to act now for the sake of all humankind. Most of all, as citizens of planet Earth, we understand that as individuals and as a nation our decisions have consequences beyond our borders. They have consequences for our future and for our children. These are all issues that must be weighed carefully, and it is important that all voices be considered in the debate. We thank the Assembly for giving due consideration to the voice of Seychelles.

**The Acting President**: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Danny Faure, Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Khudayr al-Khuzai, Vice-President of the Republic of Iraq**

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Iraq.

*Mr. Khudayr al-Khuzai, Vice-President of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President**: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Khudayr al-Khuzai, Vice-President of the Republic of Iraq, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Al-Khuzai** (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I stand here today in order to convey to the General Assembly the sincere regards and best wishes of the people of Iraq, who wish to share in forging closer bonds of amity and cooperation between peoples and countries, at a time when my country is undergoing a structural transformation at every level, a process that will enable it to reform itself, achieve its goals and consolidate its gains.

We are building a future through the conscious understanding of our history as the cradle of civilization and where the earliest writing system and codification of laws were born. Iraq has been successful in establishing a democratic, pluralistic and federalist State on the basis of an enlightened Constitution, drafted by our people's representatives and voted on by our people.

Our Constitution lays out the aspirations of our people to a free and decent life based on freedom, democracy and the peaceful transfer of authority, citizenship and human rights. Iraq has regained its security, political and economic health in record time and under extremely difficult conditions, where the forces of darkness had been betting that terrorism would derail the experiment. However, thanks to God and the patriotic vigour and self-awareness of our nation, our people were able to turn the page. Our efforts are based on a cultural history of about 10,000 years and on a great human legacy created by the heavenly messages and laudable human experiences that flourished in our glorious land.

Our renewed ambition to build a modern State where the Iraqi people enjoy freedom, development and prosperity requires us to move towards the establishment of good, friendly and equal relations with all nations in the world, within the framework of a cooperative international system governed by clear rules that prevent the problems and crises that could undermine its prosperity and stability. The new Iraq has chosen to embark on the path of cooperation and coordination with the international community in the political, economic and development spheres. Those efforts have been coupled with significant qualitative leaps in our economic growth that will qualify Iraq to return to the realm of the world economy and to emerge within the international economic system, based on a realistic vision that has achieved a number of positive developments over recent years.

According to various indicators, our gross domestic product (GDP) has doubled, which has in turn doubled the per capita share of the GDP. According to projections by the International Monetary Fund, Iraq's GDP is expected to reach approximately $150 billion in 2014. The Iraqi Government has also succeeded in implementing policies to curb inflation and to control governmental spending, in addition to our success in collaborating with the international community to reduce the debt accumulated by the country over past decades.

We have embraced a theory of balanced growth in our national development plans for the upcoming years, in which the oil sector is to serve as the engine for other sectors. Iraq has oil reserves amounting to about 143 billion barrels and potential reserves surpassing the current estimated proven reserves, in addition to large reserves of natural gas amounting to 126.7 trillion cubic feet. We expect investments to contribute to substantial development in the oil industry in Iraq through licensing rounds, establishing refineries and other oil- and gas-related sectors and industries. Estimates suggest that from 2017 to 2020 production will reach more than 10 million barrels of oil per day. The development plan will include all sectors and infrastructure in order to provide secure and promising investment opportunities. The Iraqi Government has prepared legislation to promote confidence in the Iraqi economy by providing legal protection for foreign investments in Iraq through the guarantees listed in the

investment law itself and through Iraq's accession to the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency in 2007 and through bilateral treaties to guarantee and protect investments.

We were able to establish solid foundations for political conduct, which has matured rapidly as our people have grown to accept those unlike themselves and to live according to the principle of citizenship, the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary and the freedom of expression. We proudly announce that, owing to our freedom of opinion and expression, we do not have a single prisoner jailed for his beliefs or opinions. In our fight against terrorism, human rights remain a cherished principle that we respect and promote as a just cause. We do not have any justification to tamper with such rights.

It is true that confronting terrorism has cost Iraq a lot of blood, tears, sweat and financial resources, but that confrontation has rewarded our people with a permanent immunity against violence. It has also created extreme sensitivity vis-à-vis violence as a means to resolve our strife with others. Therefore, as much as we care about sparing our people the ravages of fighting, we hope that other countries, especially neighbouring countries, will learn from the Iraqi experience and spare their peoples unnecessary turmoil. We call upon them to adopt the principle of negotiation to resolve conflicts and the use of dialogue, logic, reason, laws and the peaceful transfer of power.

That is the essence of Iraq's position regarding the revolutions of the Arab Spring, which we cannot do anything about except to be entirely on the side of the people and their legitimate aspirations, their right to self-determination and the right to choose their own rulers. We share the concerns regarding the issues facing the peoples and States Members of the Organization; those concerns represent a humanitarian, legal and moral burden, because all of us share one world, which is affected by conflicts and their aftermath.

Based on that, the Syrian issue and the humanitarian difficulties facing civilians in that country occupy a great deal of our attention. We think that the escalating violence in Syria is a reason for distress and concern, and it is incumbent upon the leaders gathered here to work in earnest to stop the bloodshed, which claims the lives of tens and perhaps hundreds of people every day in Syria. We would like also to draw attention to the danger of providing the fighting parties with weapons, which only leads to more violence, bloodshed and loss of life. The situation is endangering the social fabric of the Syrian people and may lead to fragmentation and disintegration of that people, whom we cherish and whose unity and sovereignty we care about.

We also realize that the facts on the ground suggest that regional and international intervention could adversely impact the Syrian issue and might cause unlimited chaos and devastation that would spare no one, including the interveners. We therefore sincerely call for dialogue and a peaceful solution as the only means to end a crisis that could engulf the whole region and exacerbate the current situation.

The events in Syria have demonstrated that resolving the crisis through violence and force could double the costs incurred by the Syrians and the region, for such means only increase the suffering of civilians, destroy infrastructure and multiply the number of displaced persons and refugees. That is why we hope that all the parties to the conflict understand that the military solution alone is a dangerous move and gamble. From this rostrum, we call upon kings, presidents and other heads of State here today at this humanitarian gathering to support reconciliation and dialogue among all Syrians and endorse the United Nations and Arab League initiative promoted by Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi after the noble efforts of Mr. Kofi Annan reached at an impasse.

In that regard, we do not hide our concern about the consequences of the ongoing crisis, which could only worsen if sectarian and ethnic strife is triggered. That, in turn, could lead the region and its peoples into a spiral of fighting with no end on the horizon. Such a prospect makes it incumbent upon us on us to try in earnest to contain and peacefully resolve the crisis, while preserving the interests of the Syrian people and preventing further deterioration of the situation.

Iraq's initiative aimed at resolving the Syrian crisis continues to stand as a beacon of peace, as we search for an exit acceptable to all the forces of good. Our initiative is based on the following two points. First, Iraq has a keen desire to see Syria remain intact as a State, and we support the hopes and aspirations of the Syrian people for a free and dignified life. Secondly, Iraq is concerned at the possible repercussions of the violence and destruction caused by Syria's internal war and sectarian strife, which we fear could have a spillover effect.

Iraq's unwavering and well-known position does not deviate from the Arab ranks on issues of crucial importance to our Arab nation. We accordingly support the establishment of the State of Palestine in the occupied Palestinian territories, with Jerusalem as its capital, and declare our support for the membership of the State of Palestine in the United Nations. We also declare our unequivocal rejection of the policies of oppression, Judaization and usurpation of land that Israel pursues without regard for international condemnation of its unjust practices, including the use of brutal force. We also reject Israel's disregard for the repeated international calls to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to place its military arsenal and facilities under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

We have tirelessly called for the establishment in our region of a zone without nuclear weapons. Therefore, within the international framework, we are contributing to efforts to implement a Middle East zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, chief among which are nuclear weapons. That is why we endorse the preparations for the Helsinki conference to be held this year with a view to setting up a process that would set up such a zone. Any failure in that endeavour would lead to an arms race in a region that is in dire need of peace and stability.

We condemn and reject the discriminatory policies pursued against religious and ethnic minorities in many countries the world over. We especially condemn the inhumane violations of the rights of Muslims in Myanmar, who face genocide. The world's conscience should not remain untroubled by the gravity of their plight. Such situations run counter to all the principles of human rights law, religious teachings and international conventions.

Our good and friendly relations with our neighbours, the region and the entire world are governed by a balanced foreign policy based on mutual respect, common interests and non-interference in the affairs of others. We also uphold the principles of good-neighbourliness and dialogue in our relations with the Arab and Muslim worlds, as well as with the entire world. Iraq hosted the League of Arab States Summit in March, which marked a return to our active, natural and pioneering role in joint Arab decision-making and action. That was followed by Iraq's hosting of one of the rounds of international negotiations on the Iranian nuclear issue, which we undertook in the objective, balanced and responsible spirit that characterizes Iraq's clear position with respect to that issue. It is a position that declares our firm support for international efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, while affirming the right of peoples and countries to benefit from the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

We call upon the international community, represented by the United Nations and its Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, whom we highly respect and revere, to extend support to Iraq's efforts to exit from the Chapter VII provisions imposed on us as a result of the mistaken policies of the former regime following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, especially as there is no longer any justification for such international action. Iraq is no longer a threat to anyone and has fulfilled most of its obligations, as is confirmed by the renewal of our brotherly relations with the State of Kuwait, seen specifically in the mutual visits of high-level officials of our respective countries and the serious and constructive dialogue based on a sincere desire and sustained efforts to resolve all outstanding issues between us.

I would be remiss if I failed to speak of the repulsive abuse directed at the great Prophet Muhammad — peace be upon him — and the wave of violent protests that shook the Islamic world because of a ridiculous movie that attacked the image of our Prophet — peace be upon him — a movie that nearly caused relations between East and West to unravel. We need to conduct a sincere and serious examination on how to prevent the recurrence of such insults through an international ban that criminalizes those who insult religions, disrespect religious symbols or insult the great prophets and messengers. Such actions constitute a blatant aggression against everything great, holy and sacred. The recurrence of those obscene actions will supply terrorists with prime material for recruiting angry youth for use in violent actions that threaten peace and security, which could cause many casualties, as recent events have shown.

We therefore clearly need to contain such attacks and prohibit the production and dissemination of similar provocative materials. As nobody in the Islamic world is able to contain the consequences of such disregard for Islamic values and their sanctity, we believe that the United Nations should play a central and constructive role in this matter, with a view to preventing potentially far-reaching and dangerous ramifications.

In conclusion, we, the people and Government of Iraq, extend our hand to the other Member States with a view to increased collaboration aimed at achieving our common goals. Those are noble goals, based on lofty principles and cherished human values, and honour all human beings as supremely deserving of leading a free and safe life and enjoying fundamental freedoms. We hope that when we meet again our world will be a safer place, our peoples will enjoy better conditions and the international climate will have improved.

**The Acting President**: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Iraq for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Khudayr al-Khuzai, Vice-President of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted from the rostrum.*

### Address by Mr. Riek Machar Teny-Dhurgon, Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan.

*Mr. Riek Machar Teny-Dhurgon, Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President**: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Riek Machar Teny-Dhurgon, Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

**Mr. Machar Teny-Dhurgon** (South Sudan): Allow me, at the outset, to join fellow Member States in congratulating the President of the General Assembly on his election to preside over the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session and to commend his predecessor for his successful stewardship of the most recent session.

I would like to seize this momentous occasion to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to the Secretary-General for the passion and compassion he has shown in responding to the various global challenges facing the Organization and, most important, his unwavering personal support for our referendum on self-determination, our independence and the speedy admission of the Republic of South Sudan into the United Nations.

Furthermore, we are also deeply grateful to the Assembly for the warmth, generosity and hospitality accorded to our President when he addressed the Assembly last year. He made that address at the time when the international community was concerned about the viability of our new nation. In the light of the progress we have made and despite recent events, I am pleased to address the Assembly this year under the theme of the sixty-seventh session "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means".

The Republic of South Sudan achieved its independence peacefully, through the exercise of the right of self-determination by the people of South Sudan in an internationally supervised referendum, as stipulated in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The international community played an important role in this, our independence process. We are therefore very thankful to all those who helped us achieve independence, not least the United Nations.

Our declaration of independence on 9 July 2011 did not resolve all the issues between us and the predecessor State, the Republic of the Sudan. These unresolved, post-independence issues include border demarcation, oil infrastructure, security and the final status of the Abyei Area. The bilateral engagement between the two countries failed to achieve an agreement. As a result, the African Union intervened by mandating the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, under former President Thabo Mbeki, to facilitate negotiations between the two parties.

As the situation continued to deteriorate, the Security Council intervened and adopted resolution 2046 (2012). That resolution sets out a clear road map for resolving all the remaining differences between the Sudan and South Sudan, including Abyei, and addresses the conflicts in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile.

Before I discuss the developments in the talks in Addis Ababa, allow me to also brief the Assembly on other issues of importance such as State-building, food security, public service reform, access to education, security and accountability in my country.

We have embarked upon laying a secure foundation for a prosperous, democratic and stable nation by establishing institutions at the national, state and local Government levels for governance and the delivery of services to the people. We believe that food security is not a privilege but a basic right of each and every citizen in South Sudan. No citizen should go hungry. As the saying goes, a hungry man is an angry man. It

will not be good for the stability of the country if we have many hungry and angry men. In our endeavour to achieve food security, we are diversifying the economy by utilizing oil revenues to fuel agriculture and build the necessary basic infrastructure. This is the only way we can benefit from the vast fertile agricultural lands that our country is generously endowed with.

Our public service is functioning satisfactorily, especially after the introduction of far-reaching public service reforms. That has brought about efficiency and transparency in service delivery. We have introduced constructive and effective reforms in our public financial management and have strengthened measures to improve transparency and accountability.

As for education, we have increased access to education for all children in South Sudan. Since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, in 2005, enrolment in our primary schools has more than doubled. In the past year, we continued to strengthen and expand the education sector by further introducing alternative education. This innovative notion of an alternative education system is currently offering accelerated learning programmes to more than 200,000 youth and adults. Favourable conditions and terms of service for teachers have been introduced throughout the country, and the Government is working tirelessly to meet the rapidly increasing demand for secondary education caused by the increase in primary school enrolment.

However, the Government still has a long way to go in providing educational opportunities for our children and youth that prepare them for the future and meet their expectations and aspirations. At this juncture, allow me to commend the launch by the Secretary-General of the Global Initiative on Education, which we hope will open up avenues of collaboration between South Sudan and the international community on improving education access for our children.

Our nascent nation has been tested enormously in its first year of independence. We have been tested by conflicts within and beyond our borders; we have been tested by severe economic hardship; and we have been tested by the revelation of severe abuse of the public trust and funds resulting partly from malpractice and lack of capacity. The Government is undertaking serious corrective measures and institutional capacity-building to address that issue in order to restore public confidence.

My Government is striving harder than ever to combat corruption in our public service. Along with reformed systems for management of public funds and tighter controls, we are combating corruption through the rule of law and through greater transparency and accountability. The Government has enacted legislation that holds public officials accountable and brings the management of our resources closer to international standards.

The Government has published the entire annual budget and opened our books to public scrutiny. By the end of the year, we aim to be up to date on all of the audits of our national accounts since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, in 2005. As an accountable Government before our people, we still believe that there is a long way ahead to achieve the efficiency, transparency and accountability in our public service and financial management. Despite the economic peril since the shut-down of oil production, we are, nevertheless, encouraged that the current period of austerity has strengthened our resolve to press ahead in our reform agenda and has allowed us to lay a strong foundation for more efficient and accountable governance beyond the austerity period — tough times never last, but tough people do.

With regard to security, the Republic of South Sudan is currently facing security threats in the form of armed militia groups that are creating insecurity and undermining our young democracy. The Government has accorded the highest priority to reaching a peaceful resolution to these internal conflicts. Four of the armed militia groups have laid down their weapons and have integrated voluntarily into our national army and civilian life.

We believe that the internal and external security of our nation is a prerequisite for having meaningful economic development and social progress. While we are working tirelessly towards achieving and maintaining peace within our borders, critical unresolved issues remain between South Sudan and the Sudan, including border demarcation, citizenship rights, the status of Abyei and oil-related issues. The lack of progress on those post-independence issues has been posing a threat to peace and stable relations between the two countries.

Our relations with the Sudan reached a critical juncture last year, when Khartoum blocked tankers loaded with our crude oil and prevented them from departing from Port Sudan. In addition, Sudan seized

and resold crude oil that we had sold to international customers. By January, we had lost some $800 million in revenues. At that point, my Government was left with no choice but to shut down oil production. The decision was publicly supported by the majority of our people.

In the context of relations of South Sudan and the Sudan, it is incumbent upon my Government to shed some light of what became known as the Heglig or Panthou incident between us and the Republic of the Sudan. That crisis was the result of increasing border tensions and repeated bombings in the border areas of my country by the Sudanese Armed Forces.

In April, our forces clashed with the Sudanese army in an area inside South Sudan, several kilometers south of Heglig. That resulted in our armed forces taking over Heglig temporarily; we acted in self-defence to prevent Heglig from being used as a launching pad for military attacks by the Sudanese Armed Forces on our country.

In compliance with advice from the international community, we withdraw our forces soon thereafter. Although Heglig is historically part of South Sudan, it was not our intention to take it by force. We believe that we can settle the matter through peaceful negotiations.

Another area in which we believe we have not been well understood by the international community is our alleged support for the Sudan People's Liberation Movement – North (SPLM-North). What may not be fully appreciated by outside observers is that those forces were integral members of the SPLM. But although they fought side by side with us, they were not fighting for the independence of southern Sudan, but for their own cause through alliance with us. Of course, we shared a common vision of creating a new, fundamentally restructured united Sudan of inclusivity, equity and dignity for all, without discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion or culture. But we also had issues that were specific to our particular situation and which, for us, eventually led to our independence.

It should be recalled that the CPA included a special protocol on Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states that addressed their special grievances. That protocol is yet to be credibly implemented. As the SPLM-North were former allies who contributed significantly to our success in achieving the objectives of our struggle, we obviously have a moral and, indeed, political obligation to assist them in addressing their legitimate grievances, as stipulated and agreed in the CPA.

In that connection, South Sudan is currently carrying the burden of accommodating an increasing number of refugees from the two areas. We therefore call upon the international community to assist in meeting the humanitarian needs of the refugees within South Sudan, as well as throughout the Sudanese territory for those internally displaced by the conflict.

Our President stated in his statement at our independence celebration:

> "We cannot abandon them, but would support their cause peacefully through negotiated settlement between them and the Government of the Sudan".

South Sudan will use its good offices as a former ally of the SPLM-North to assist the Sudan by acting as an honest broker in mediating a peaceful, but just, resolution of the conflict. We believe that our role as honest brokers will in the long term assist our neighbour to the north, the Government of the Sudan, to achieve peace and stability. We are glad that the United Nations recognizes that there can be no military solution to the conflict and that a negotiated settlement is the way forward.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that, today, President Salva Kiir Mayardit and President Omer Hassan A. Al-Bashir signed an agreement that will allow the two countries to pursue their national development efforts under a secure and lasting peace. We are hopeful that the new agreement with the Sudan will lead to the resolution of our differences on security, borders and the use of petroleum infrastructure.

It is envisaged that if each side upholds its part of this agreement, the most significant causes of dispute between our two countries will have been amicably resolved. Diplomacy will have won, and reason will have prevailed.

With the resolution of those key matters, preparations to resume oil production in South Sudan will now begin. The following agreements were signed today between our two countries: first, the Agreement Concerning Oil and Related Economic Matters; second, the Framework Agreement on the Status of Nationals of the Other State; third, the Agreement on the Demarcation of the Boundary; fourth, an agreement on border issues; fifth, the Agreement on a Framework for Cooperation on Central Banking Issues; sixth, the Agreement on Trade and Trade-related Issues; seventh, the Agreement on Certain Economic Matters: Division of Assets and Liabilities, Arrears and Claims and Joint

Approach to the International Community; and, finally, eighth, the Framework Agreement to Facilitate Payment of Post-Service Benefits.

While we are happy with all that has been agreed today by our two countries, I wish to inform the General Assembly that we have failed to reach agreement on Abyei. President Al-Bashir has rejected the proposal of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, as stipulated under Security Council resolution 2046 (2012). It is now incumbent upon the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council, together with the United Nations Security Council, to take the action necessary to move forward.

We are thankful to both the AU Peace and Security Council and the United Nations Security Council for their great efforts to bring about this agreement between our two countries.

As our President stated in this forum one year ago, "The ambition of the people of South Sudan is to be able to transform their country into a regional agro-industrial powerhouse" (see A/66/PV.19), with reduced dependence on external assistance, and the potential to feed the people of South Sudan and to be a breadbasket for East Africa.

Our strategy is aimed at utilizing oil wealth as a catalyst to stimulate our economic development potential, with an emphasis on agriculture.

We are conscious of the fact that we cannot achieve those goals alone. We need continued support from friends, partners and the international community. We are confident that together we shall overcome the challenges ahead. I take this opportunity once more, on behalf of the people and the Government of South Sudan, to express our profound gratitude for the support rendered to us by the United Nations, the AU, regional organizations, friends and partners.

*Mr. Momen (Bangladesh), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

Finally, allow me to reiterate the resolve and the commitment of the people and the Government of the Republic of South Sudan to be a productive and active member of this global family of nations, and to make their contribution to promoting world peace and prosperity for all humankind.

**The Acting President**: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Riek Machar Teny-Dhurgon, Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, was escorted from the rostrum.*

## Address by Mr. Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda.

*Mr. Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President**: I have great pleasure in welcoming Mr. Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

**Mr. Spencer** (Antigua and Barbuda): I wish at the outset to extend my heartiest congratulations and the assurances of my cooperation and highest esteem to President Jeremić on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. Antigua and Barbuda looks forward to his leadership and guidance throughout this session.

I extend congratulations also to your predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, on a job well done and for his continued service to the international community.

The theme of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means", is judicious, for it accurately summarizes how we as nations need to act in these precarious times of insecurity and uncertainty. These times and circumstances call for a heightened sense of urgency and a stronger will among all nations to work with and through the United Nations in embracing multilateralism in its truest form.

The sixty-seventh session of the Assembly is taking place in an environment of continued challenges to international peace and security; international democracy is being tested; there is unbearable poverty throughout the world; the sluggish recovery of the

world's economy provides little hope; and disasters induced by climate change are becoming more rampant.

As we look around our global community, we ask ourselves what we can do to solve the many problems we face, and how we can find and maintain the peace that we so desire. Maybe if we ask ourselves not as individuals but as nations what peace is, then, perhaps, we can collectively resolve to find the answer so as to achieve peace.

For Antigua and Barbuda, peace means respect for human rights and the differences of others and the protection of women, children and the elderly. Peace is devoid of greed that ends in unparalleled wealth for a few and nauseating poverty for many. Peace means global health awareness, protection and accessibility for all. Peace means democracies with active global citizens, by non-violent change. Peace means eliminating nuclear weapons and controlling small arms.

Peace is free of violence and requires the acceptance of differences in race, gender and religion. Peace is a position from which to value the limits of nature's resources, and it is characterized by the absence of the ignorance and shortsightedness that leads some to selfishly plunder Earth's plenty. Peace is the understanding that climate change is real and that sustainability should be our priority. Peace means fair trade and equality of equity in globalization.

Peace is the elimination of corruption in Government. Peace is the understanding and the recognition that the world's problems can be solved only by the inclusion of all countries. Peace therefore involves a wider and equal representation in the Security Council rather than membership by a selected few.

In 2011, we celebrated the International Year for Peoples of African Descent. That year has passed, and gone from the international agenda is the issue of reparations for slavery, which is central to fighting racism and racial discrimination and nurturing a culture of peace among nations. The legacy of racial violence, segregation and slavery against peoples of African descent has severely impaired our advancement as nations, communities and individuals across the political, social and, most importantly, the economical spectrums. In the words of Kwame Nkrumah, we can no longer afford the luxury of delay. The time has come for us to revisit the issue of reparations for slavery and place it at the top of the international agenda.

Over 200 million persons in the Americas depend on us. That is why I am reiterating a call I made in the Hall in 2011 for former slave States to begin the reconciliation process by issuing formal apologies for the crimes committed by the nations or their citizens over the 400 years of the African slave trade. While nations in the developing world continue to grapple with the effects of a world economic crisis that is not of their own making, I call on former slave States to back up their apologies with new commitments to the economic development of those nations that have suffered from that human tragedy.

Transnational crime is threatening the very existence of peace in Antigua and Barbuda. Our small size and lack of human and financial resources make it difficult for us, as a small island nation, to address that problem in an effective manner. The crime and violence fuelled by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons are jeopardizing our major industries, including tourism. Our health-care systems are weighted down, and families are being torn apart. Nevertheless, crime prevention and small arms control is a priority for my Government. It is important to note that neither Antigua and Barbuda nor our Caribbean Community brothers and sisters manufacture small arms or light weapons, yet one recent estimate indicates that there are 1.6 million illegal firearms in the region.

Additionally, Antigua and Barbuda is deeply saddened by the fact that, despite significant efforts, strong will on the part of the majority of States and the fact that a compromise was potentially within reach, there was no agreement on a text for the recently discussed legally binding arms trade treaty. The Assembly can rest assured that Antigua and Barbuda will not give up, and we will continue to advocate for a legally binding treaty that will eliminate the threat that is crippling our region.

Antigua and Barbuda is committed to the rule of law and the process it enables for direct political dialogue and cooperation among all States and international actors. The rule of law facilitates international peace and security, human rights and development for all. Our joint responses to the threats to peace and security, along with the opportunities arising from various political, economic and social instabilities, must be guided by the rule of law, as it is the basis for friendly coexistence and interdependence between and among States.

My Government upholds the ideals of the recently concluded High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels and stands committed to upholding that very important principle.

The Caribbean has been known as a zone of peace. We value our ability to live and work together despite our different religious and political beliefs and ethnic backgrounds. Antigua and Barbuda therefore condemns the brutal killing of the United States Ambassador to Libya and the destruction of the United States Consulate in Libya. We condemn any acts of violence or killings disguised as actions to defend religious belief. If we are to build an environment of peace around the world, we must show tolerance for all peoples and beliefs.

The dangers posed by non-State actors acquiring weapons of mass destruction are real and should be seen by all countries, large and small, as the single most destructive element threatening international peace and security. Antigua and Barbuda is particularly concerned by the lack of progress in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. There should be no compromise on that issue. Antigua and Barbuda remains resolute in our continued call for a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The recently concluded Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development provided an international platform from which to address the social, economic and environmental challenges affecting the international community. Those challenges are direct threats to humankind and oftentimes jeopardize peace and security for all.

In resolution 66/288, entitled "The future we want", Antigua and Barbuda saw the Rio+20 Conference as securing comprehensive and inclusive sustainability for small island nations, whose survival is contingent on an outcome of commitments and actions from the Conference.

At the recently concluded summit of the Alliance of Small Island States, my country joined with other small island States in sending a strong message to the international community on the need for bold and ambitious actions. We cannot wait for our lands to disappear before we act. We must act now to respond to the climate crisis and ensure that not a single country is sacrificed, no matter how small.

The threat is real. Our sea levels are rising, there is coral bleaching beyond our shores, and hurricanes are becoming more recurrent and severe. The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change needs to take concrete steps in order to protect small island developing States and other exposed countries from the threats of climate change.

The responsibility to mitigate climate change should be at the forefront of the collective consciousness of both developing and developed countries. However, developed countries should accept their responsibilities as the leading contributors to the extremely high levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, which are now threatening the welfare of present and future generations. It is my Government's hope that the selfish act of inaction will dissipate in Doha and that a positive outcome in the climate change negotiations will usher in new hopes for humanity and compassion for our planet.

Antigua and Barbuda is doing its part to protect Mother Earth. My Government has embarked on a renewable energy mandate. We are now shifting our focus towards harvesting water and wind to meet our energy needs. We are protecting our ecosystem with strong legislation, and we are replanting mangroves and protecting areas that are sensitive to pollutants. Climate change and sustainability are high on my Government's development and investment priorities, and we are ensuring that new and refurbished private and commercial investments are in line with our green approach to our society.

My Government also joins with member States of the Alliance of Small Island States in calling on the General Assembly to designate 2014 as the International Year of Small Island Developing States in order to raise awareness of the special situation of our members and mobilize international support for our sustainable development.

Over the past year, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti has made important progress in its support to the Haitian people's efforts to consolidate democracy, stability and the rule of law and to move forward on the path to social and economic development. In spite of the progress made, the situation in Haiti remains fragile, as the country strives to overcome its daunting political, social and economic challenges.

I therefore stress the need for adequate funding and continued implementation of the Mission in Haiti. I would like to reiterate my Government's strong support for the Mission in Haiti and to stress that peace will

only be achieved if we simultaneously address issues of security, national reconciliation and development. I also call on those nations that pledged assistance to Haiti to honour their commitments. Those pledges are urgently needed, now that the rebuilding phase is progressing under a new Administration.

It has been nearly five years since we started to see a sharp downturn in the world's economy. Unfortunately, Antigua and Barbuda is among the small and developing States that have yet to see significant improvements. While we have made several attempts to curtail the haemorrhaging of our fragile economies, it must be said that we need greater cooperation, flexibility and inclusion on the part of our developed partners. Gross domestic product can no longer be the criterion used in accessing concessionary financing and other international financial relief; instead, mechanisms should be put in place that take into consideration a host of other elements, including the fragility of economies.

We are still in a crisis, a crisis of confidence in global governance and the institutional capacity for managing the international financial system, international trade and international development policies. We are also living in the era of globalization where cooperative collectives — and not ambitious and selfish empires — must be the order of the day in international financial governance. A privileged few should never be allowed to make financial decisions that impact the socioeconomic livelihood of millions without regard for that excluded majority. Economic prosperity should be shared equally among countries and within countries. The exclusive clubs of the Group of Eight and the Group of 20 cannot repair the fragmented international financial system without taking due consideration of the majority of nations left on the outside with much to offer.

My Government calls on developed countries and the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to guarantee that their response with regard to international tax matters will involve improved international cooperation on tax issues through comprehensive and supportive frameworks that ensure the involvement and equal treatment of small jurisdictions like Antigua and Barbuda without the nuances of inappropriately branding us as tax havens.

Antigua and Barbuda has been proactive in its approach to diversifying our economy. We entered into the international gaming sector abiding by all prescribed international standards. Unfortunately, our friend and developed partner, the United States of America, was of the view that our gaming sector contravened its domestic laws. Antigua and Barbuda found it appropriate to seek international redress on the matter through the dispute resolution mechanism at the World Trade Organization. We prevailed, and the United States was ordered to compensate Antigua and Barbuda for its losses. Yet, years later, Antigua and Barbuda is still engaging in negotiations with the United States. I therefore call on the Government of the United States to work with us to quickly resolve the matter so that we can arrive at a settlement that is fair and just. I also call on the United States to work cooperatively with Antigua and Barbuda and other remote gaming jurisdictions to forge an enlightened, reasonable and reasoned way of addressing the regulation and licensing of remote gaming services.

While we are on the matter of trade disputes, it has been decades since the United States instituted its embargo on Cuba. Time and time again the international community, acting through the General Assembly, has called on the United States to lift that trade embargo. However, it continues unabated. Since its inception, the embargo has inflicted untold economic damage on the Cuban people, caused shortages and needless suffering to the Cuban population, limited and restrained the development of the country and seriously damaged the Cuban economy. Through all of that, the Cuban people have managed to preserve their sovereignty, independence and right to self-determination. As a country committed to the norms of the multilateral trading system and to the freedom of trade and navigation and a country that rejects the extraterritorial application of another country's national laws, Antigua and Barbuda calls on the United States to immediately and unconditionally lift its economic embargo against the people of Cuba. It is time to turn a new page of peace, cooperation and understanding, a time for global healing and international community-building. The continuation of the embargo further destroys the very fabric of hope that we have created as a community of nations in order to resolve the world's issues.

The world is changing. Economies, policies and countries are becoming more intertwined than ever before. Antigua and Barbuda sees those relationships of integration as positive steps towards achieving a world that is not dominated by a few but represents rather a

unification of leadership in the hope of combating most of the world's shortcomings.

The smaller developing countries in the Caribbean and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) are poised to make great strides in our integration agenda. The ratification of the OECS Economic Union is a major step in that direction. We have a stable shared currency, with a monetary council that has been instrumental in preventing further deterioration of our economies. There have been renewed commitments by all of the Caribbean Community countries to work tirelessly to realize the full potential of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy. Antigua and Barbuda has joined the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, an institution that is built on the principles of solidarity, complementarity and cooperation. The Community of Latin America and Caribbean States — a new integration arm within our region — the geographical position of our countries, our shared cultures and values and our desires as developing partners for a more just global community that is built on fairness and peace give my Government hope that all is not lost as regards multilateralism.

Antigua and Barbuda faces many challenges in the prevention, care and treatment of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Heart disease, diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease and chronic respiratory diseases continue to be the leading causes of death in Antigua and Barbuda, with cancer and heart disease being the top two causes. The burdens of the cost, the loss of productivity and the disabilities as a result of chronic diseases continue to weigh heavy on our health-care system, since treatment for those diseases and their complications, including dialysis, chemotherapy and drug therapy, continue to be offered free of cost to patients. The fight against NCDs remains high, therefore, on Antigua and Barbuda's health agenda.

Following our participation in the United Nations High-level Meeting on the subject last year, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda approved the establishment of a multisectoral NCD commission to provide leadership in that critical area, drafted legislation for tobacco control, engaged civil society and non-governmental organizations in drafting an NCD policy and action plan and has supported plans for the development of a comprehensive cancer treatment centre in Antigua and Barbuda to serve the OECS. The Ministries of Health and Agriculture continue to collaborate in the development of a food policy that will address some of the risk factors for NCDs.

The fight against HIV/AIDS in my region is also real. The figures are heartbreaking, and the outlook is troubling. Despite some progress, much still needs to be done to achieve the 2015 goal of universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, support and care. My Government is in the process of updating the code of conduct to prevent discrimination in the workplace against persons living with HIV/AIDS. We will not tolerate injustice, intolerance and violence of any kind against persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Many might believe that for countries like Antigua and Barbuda, as a small island developing State, our only concern is for development, but I stand here today with grave concern that the disregard for world peace and security threatens the very existence of humankind and will push the international community into further chaos and destruction. We cannot ignore from our tiny peaceful shores the images that glare from our TV screens of unrest, protest and demonstrations from various corners of the world. The images are daunting, the voices of change are deafening and the use of force or threat of use of force to suppress the voices of democracy is intolerable. The United Nations has to be unified in its response so as to act in a peaceful manner while protecting the rights of populations near and far.

The situation in Syria is disheartening. Children, women and the elderly must be protected. I call on both sides to exercise restraint and allow humanitarian relief supplies to enter Syria. I also call on all nations to cease supplying arms to the two sides in the conflict. As leaders, our priority must be to urge all parties in Syria to implement a ceasefire and stop the violence immediately and completely. Every effort must be made to implement Mr. Annan's six-point proposal and the relevant Security Council resolutions. The United Nations and the Arab League must lead in that process. Any threats of war must be suppressed, and negotiation and mediation should be the order of the day. If it is not addressed, the Syrian crisis will soon pose a serious threat to international peace and security. Antigua and Barbuda will continue to give its support to a just, peaceful and appropriate settlement of the Syrian crisis at an early date.

These are undeniably perilous times. An event can occur in a distant part of the globe that can severely impact Antigua and Barbuda domestically, an event

that completely ignores the importance of achieving tolerance by peaceful means. Our response may be one of indignation but also a sense that we live in a perilous atmosphere characterized by the intolerance of peace. The multiplicity and interconnectedness of the many global threats and challenges we face will test the abilities of this Assembly. Is the United Nations up to the task?

I am confident that by sharing our collective wisdom and using it as a resource, the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session will take decisions of meaningful and enduring benefit and peace for the peoples of the world. I am equally confident that our deliberations can lead to solutions that will ensure the protection of all our peoples. I therefore call on all of us, as world leaders, to rise to the challenges and move with haste to bring peace to the citizens of the world. We are leaders and caretakers of humankind and, as such, our response to those challenges will be recorded in the books of history, which will reveal whether we had the ability to act with constraint, effectiveness and fairness in order to achieve stability through peaceful means. Let peace reign.

**The Acting President**: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted from the rostrum.*

*The meeting rose at 6.55 p.m.*